



JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

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IN MEMORIAM

Ralph H. Isham -- Percy Laithwaite

Since our last number two eminent Johnsonians have passed away-- Lieut.-Col. Ralph H. Isham and Percy Laithwaite. These two, an American and an Englishman, will always be remembered for outstanding contributions to Boswell and Johnson studies.

Never were two men more dissimilar -- one a well-to-do man of the world, who spent much of his life and fortune bringing together Boswell's great collection of manuscripts; the other a modest schoolmaster in Lichfield, who devoted his spare time to digging deep into the local records. One was dramatic and colorful, known the world over for his various exploits; the other was willing always to remain in the background, often allowing others to publish the results of his exciting discoveries.

To all intents and purposes they moved in different spheres. Yet in many ways their goals were alike. They loved the eighteenth-century and were zealous in bringing it to life for others. Both at times had sharp tongues and were scornful of mediocrity and shoddy scholarship. At the same time each in his own way was the soul of generosity. Laithwaite would patiently give long hours of unselfish help in answer to serious or patently foolish requests. For those he knew well and liked Isham was lavish in his aid. He loved to give presents, and one rarely came away from a visit to him without something to treasure.

What the general public knew of Ralph Isham was his flair for the dramatic, his eccentricities, and his flamboyant manner. Only his intimate friends sensed the emotional depths that lay beneath and the wells of kindness that were masked by his worldly and witty talk. As a raconteur he was supreme. Few had his skill in spinning a yarn, his mastery of timing, and his gift for dramatic characterization. Many of us will always lament the fact that he

steadfastly resisted the recording of more of his stories for posterity. Yet for those privileged to spend long evenings in his apartment on East 53rd Street they will remain a wonderful, happy memory.

Nor will travelers to Lichfield ever forget the fascinating tours about the city with Laithwaite as an inspired guide, or the annual birthday suppers at the Guildhall, which owed so much to his careful planning. Serious scholars could be sure also of hours spent poring over dusty records at the Birthplace or beside the fireplace at his home in Burton Old Road. For many of us Percy Laithwaite came to stand for Lichfield. It will never be the same again.

JOHNSON AND BOSWELL NOTES

We have not yet had reports of the annual birthday celebrations at Lichfield, Buenos Aires, and Oslo, but presume all went off as planned, though in Argentina the 18th must have been tense with excitement. The dinner at the Grolier Club in New York was late this year, being held on Friday, September 30. Arthur Houghton, Jr., was in the chair, and a goodly company were there to toast "The Immortal Memory." The principal address was given by Ned McAdam of New York University, who spoke on Johnson as a bibliographer and lover of old books. As a keepsake, the guests were presented with a handsome pamphlet entitled Dr. Johnson and the King's Library, which included a facsimile of Johnson's famous letter to Barnard, the King's librarian, of May 28, 1768, and a valuable commentary by McAdam.

Other separate Johnsonian publications which should be mentioned are: the catalogue of the Columbia University exhibition in honor of the bicentenary of the Dictionary last spring, issued by the Columbia library; the University of Chicago Round Table, No. 890, May 1, 1955, which gives a transcript of the trans-Atlantic broadcast on the Dictionary last spring, with Keast, Powell, Sledd and Sutherland as the speakers; Still Raise for Good the Supplicating Voice, the River Plate "Johnson anthem," with words from the Vanity of Human Wishes and music by Ruby K. de Rodger; a facsimile of Johnson's Latin letter to Huddesford of February 26, 1755, from the Hyde collection, with notes by Fritz Liebert, privately printed for a dinner given by Halstead Vanderpool last April.

On September 30 all but two of the American members of the advisory editorial committee for the new Yale Johnson edition met as guests of the Chairman, Fritz Liebert. Specific plans were laid for publishing the first volume at an early date. We will keep you posted on further developments in our next number.

We have had various accounts from Albert Hall-Johnson of a special Dictionary exhibition in Argentina, sponsored by the Johnson Society of the River Plate and the Asociación Argentina de Cultura Inglesa. At the opening there was an address by Dr. Angel Battistessa. The collection of books, largely from the library of Hall-Johnson, was first shown in Buenos Aires and then sent to Rosario and to Mendoza. We have received a mimeographed catalogue of the exhibition, which is perhaps the first public showing of Johnsoniana in South America.

We hear that the next President of the Lichfield Society is to be Sir Charles Lillicrap, Director of Naval Construction.

Jim Sledd (Chicago) sends us word of a Hungarian scholar, Ladislav Orszagh, who would like to receive offprints of articles concerned with Johnson's Dictionary, to be used in writing a general review for a Hungarian journal. His address is Budapest V, Balaton utca 12.IV.4, Hungary. We hope you will all help in any way you can.

There was an editorial on Johnson in the little trade publication Book Chat (summer 1955), issued by Kroch's and Brentano's in Chicago. And there are some foolish remarks about the latest Boswell volume in The Italian Scene (Vol. II, No. 8), issued by the Cultural Division of the Italian Embassy in New York.

On June 30 Dr. Fritz Güttinger lectured on "Dictionary Johnson" at the University of Zürich.

As some evidence of the interest aroused in Great Britain over the announcement of the new Johnson edition, see the printed account of the luncheon of the Pilgrims Society, held at the Savoy Hotel in London on July 20, with President Griswold of Yale as the principal guest. In his introductory remarks the Earl of Halifax spoke chiefly about the edition and the gratitude everyone felt at the announced publication of Johnson's complete works. ("Applause" indicated at this point).

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

Let us say right at the start that Jack Bate (Harvard) has written a fine book. The Achievement of Samuel Johnson (Oxford Univ. Press) is first rate. This, we insist without hesitation, is what ought to be said about Johnson, and it is admirably expressed. In the biographical part, to be sure, there is much that is familiar, but for the majority of readers this is obviously needed to set the stage for the literary criticism. And here Bate is original and compelling. What appeals most to us is the discussion of what he calls "the series of majestic prose threnodies that begin with the Rambler and conclude with Rasselas," with their "'epic wind of sadness'" and the powerful general observations that "reverberate throughout this prose like muffled drum rolls."

Bate allows no concessions to those who think of Johnson merely as an amusing talker and benevolent humanist. He was also "one of the supreme writers of English prose." Moreover, Johnson was a deep thinker, whose relevance for us is "not simply that he touches directly on so much that we care about. It is especially to be found in the way his thought proceeds, which is like that of experience itself." One claim may startle some readers. "Johnson's own sense of the working of the human imagination," Bate insists, "probably provides us with the closest anticipation of Freud to be found in psychology or moral writing before the twentieth century." And Bate supports his remark with fascinating discussions of particular passages from the essays. The fullness and richness of Johnson's thought in his writings is brought out again and again.

Together with Joseph Wood Krutch's superb biography, this outstanding book gives us Johnson whole.

A HISTORY OF MODERN CRITICISM

The first volumes of René Wellek's new survey of literary criticism from 1750 to the present have been receiving excellent reviews, which they richly deserve. We comment here only on Vol. I, "The Later Eighteenth Century" -- a work we found very valuable. It is smoothly written, full of shrewd comments and wise generalizations.

Like every specialist, we have some reservations concerning the treatment of our own particular hero. Not that Wellek is unfair to Johnson. But it is inevitable that any attempt to sum up

a major figure in a chapter of twenty-five pages should result in some over-simplification. On the other hand, we found his chapters on Voltaire and the French critics fascinating. Moreover, we recommend the first chapter on "Neoclassicism and the New Trends of the Time" as a useful introduction to which to send beginning students.

Wellek's approach is a good antidote to some one-sided romantic commentary. As he clearly shows, the basic aims of neoclassicism were sound. If the critical terms used are reinterpreted for our day they can still be defended. The neoclassical critics were "not authoritarians, but rather rationalists." In his discussion of the true meaning of "imitation of nature" Wellek is excellent, and shows how wrong have been so many later critics who thought of it as mere copying or photographic naturalism.

Some reviewers have insisted that Wellek's approach is not wholly that of an objective historian, that his is a personal evaluation, in which the writers of the past are judged according to the standards of modern criticism. Yet it is this personal quality which adds vigor and pungency to the writing. Here is a clear-thinking judge, with an awe-inspiring knowledge of earlier English and Continental writers, saying just what he thinks about the literary cross-currents at the end of the eighteenth century. Frankly, we found it highly stimulating. It is a major work of our time, which will be long read and discussed.

THE MAJOR SATIRES OF ALEXANDER POPE

Just as we prepare to go to press there comes a copy of Bob Rogers's The Major Satires of Alexander Pope (Univ. of Illinois Press), obviously an outstanding contribution to our knowledge about Pope's later career. We must postpone any specific remarks until a later number, by which time we trust you all will have seen it. What strikes us on first glance to be particularly useful for other research workers is Appendix E, a check-list of pamphlets connected with Pope which were printed in England between 1728 and 1744. In the book there are chapters on the Dunciad, the Essay on Man and the Ethic Epistles, and the Imitations of Horace, as well as discussions of the influence of Warburton on Pope's later satiric mode, and of his quarrel with Lady Mary and Lord Hervey. All in all, this is a rich harvest for those interested in Pope.

OTHER NEW BOOKS

For years those of us who teach the eighteenth century to undergraduates have found it very difficult to teach Goldsmith since there was no satisfactory inexpensive text. Happily, that lack has been remedied by Ted Hilles (Yale) with his new volume of selections in the Modern Library. In some 580 pages Hilles has packed in most of what we need. There is the whole of the Vicar of Wakefield and She Stoops to Conquer, an abridgement of the Life of Nash, selected letters from The Citizen of the World, other well known essays and criticisms, and the principal poems. With Hilles's admirable Introduction, the volume deserves to be widely used.

Since we had some connection with Chester F. Chapin's Personification in Eighteenth-Century Poetry (Columbia Univ. Press) in its early stages we will restrain our inclination to indulge in superlatives. But we heartily recommend the book to you. Starting from recent discussions by Bronson and Wasserman, Chapin distinguishes two different types of personification -- one which approaches the nature of allegory and the other which shows certain of the characteristics of metaphor. Some idea of the nature of the contents may be had from the titles of the chapters: "Addison and the Empirical Theory of Imagination," "The Personified Abstraction as an 'Object of Sight,'" "The Values of Allegorical Personification: Collins and Gray," "Attitudes toward Personification in the Late Eighteenth Century: Darwin and Wordsworth," "Personification as a Figure of Rhetoric: Johnson," "The Inherent Values of Eighteenth-Century Personification: Pope." We think Chapin has illumined this difficult topic with many fresh insights.

The Henry Regnery Co. has issued a paper-backed volume of selections from Johnson's Lives of the Poets, with a short Introduction by Warren L. Fleischauer of Michigan State College. Included in the 401 pages are excerpts from the lives of Cowley, Milton, Dryden, Addison; and the lives of Savage, Pope, Collins, and Gray. There is no indication as to the source of the texts used. Nor are there any footnotes or other annotation.

John C. Hodges's description of "The Library of William Congreve," which appeared in numbers of the Bulletin of the New York Public Library, has been reprinted as a bound volume by the Library. It is a valuable reference work.

Bertrand Bronson has brought out a second, revised edition of his Catches and Gleees of the Eighteenth Century (Univ. of Calif. Press), which was first printed in 1939. Taken from Apollonian Harmony (ca. 1790), these delightful examples of the sociable part singing of the age should provide much entertainment to those of us who are vocally inclined.

In Dryden and the Art of Translation (Yale Univ. Press) William Frost has provided a useful study of Dryden's theory and methods of translation, along with various other problems. In many of his generalizations Frost is as much concerned with general poetic theory as he is with Dryden. We hope to have further comments another time.

There is little need to say much about Michael Joyce's Samuel Johnson in the Men and Books series of Longmans, Green. Although he writes pleasantly and is obviously sympathetic to Johnson the man, Joyce is hopelessly old-fashioned in his literary criticism, repeating as he does all the usual nineteenth-century clichés about the inferiority of Johnson's writings. One wonders why the book was written when the author had so little new to say.

In the most recent English Institute Essays, edited by W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., there is a chapter on "Restoration Comedy and Later" by Marvin Mudrick.

There are a number of recent books having to do with the seventeenth century which we wish to mention here. Esmond S. de Beer has edited with notes a delightful pamphlet entitled English History in Pictures: Stuart Times (published by George Philip & Son under the auspices of the Historical Association). This is the second of a series designed to provide schools with illustrations of English history drawn from contemporary sources. There is a suggestion that should this be successful we may have a similar selection for the eighteenth century. We fervently hope so, for the pictures and commentary are admirable in every way.

Ben Boyce's The Polemic Character, 1640-1661: A Chapter in English Literary History (Univ. of Neb. Press) is a valuable study of a literary genre which undoubtedly was an important influence in the development of the eighteenth-century satirical character. We recommend it to you.

An excellent new book which should be useful as a background to the study of the breakdown of literary patronage in our period is Eleanor Rosenberg's Leicester: Patron of Letters (Columbia Univ. Press).

Four issues have arrived from the Augustan Reprint Society (Numbers 50, 51, 52, 53): Henry Hervey Aston, A Sermon Before the Sons of the Clergy (1745) [written by Samuel Johnson], with an Introduction by J. L. Clifford; Lewis Maidwell, An Essay upon the Necessity and Excellency of Education (1705), with an Introduction by J. Max Patrick; Pappity Stampoy, A Collection of Scotch Proverbs (1663), with an Introduction by Archer Taylor; and Urian Oakes, The Sovereign Efficacy of Divine Providence (1682), with an Introduction by Joseph L. Blau.

Other recent books to be mentioned are: Geoffrey Walton, Metaphysical to Augustan: Studies in Tone and Sensibility in the Seventeenth Century (Bowes and Bowes), about which we are not very enthusiastic; Lilian Haddakin, The Poetry of Crabbe (Chatto and Windus); Peter Quennell, Hogarth's Progress (Viking), which we haven't yet examined; Gerald D. Meyer, The Scientific Lady in England, 1650-1760 (Univ. of Calif. Press); Jean Gagen, The New Woman: Her Emergence in English Drama, 1600-1730 (Twayne); Godfrey Davies, The Restoration of Charles II, 1658-1660 (Huntington Library); Christopher Hussey, English Country Houses: Early Georgian, 1715-1760 (Country Life); Bryan Little, The Life and Work of James Gibbs, 1682-1754 (Batsford); A. Tindal Hart, The Eighteenth-Century Parson (Circa 1689-1830) (Wilding & Son); Rayner Unwin, The Rural Muse (Macmillan); Gabriel Bonno, Les Relations Intellectuelles de Locke avec la France (Univ. of Calif. Press); The Poems of Robert Fergusson, ed. by M. P. McDiarmid (Scottish Text Society); The Unpublished Poems of Robert Fergusson, ed. by William E. Gillis (M. Macdonald); Erich König, Edward Young (Bern: Franke Verlag); Giuseppe Giarizzo, Edward Gibbon e la Cultura Europea del Settecento (Naples: Nello Sede dell'Istituto); Eric Robson, The American Revolution (Batchworth); George H. Jones, The Main Stream of Jacobitism (Harvard). Henry Regnery has issued a paper-backed edition of Burke's Reflections, with an Introduction by Russell Kirk.

COMING BOOKS

The most outstanding piece of scholarship promised for autumn publication by the Clarendon Press is Esmond de Beer's long-awaited edition of the Diary of John Evelyn. It is to be in six volumes (price ten guineas), with Vol. I containing the Introduction and De Vita Propria; Vols. II-V the diaries, 1620-1706; and Vol. VI, Appendices, Additions, Corrections, and the Index. Those of us who know something of de Beer's meticulous care in editing will realize that this will be one of the major scholarly publications of our time.

Cassell's expects to publish in November three volumes of The Letters of Edward Gibbon, edited by Miss J. E. Norton. In all there are 878 letters, beginning in 1750 when Gibbon was 13 and extending to 1793.

A very important reference tool is promised soon by the Index Society -- Checklist to Correspondence of Edmund Burke, compiled by Thomas W. Copeland and Milton Smith. Handsomely printed by the Cambridge Univ. Press, it will be distributed in the United States by the Columbia University Press. The list will include about 10,000 letters from some 1,200 correspondents, the bulk of them from the Fitzwilliam Papers, and should be of great value to all of us working in the period, since so many hitherto unknown letters from other people besides Burke will be included.

In November volumes 28 and 29 of the Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence will be published -- the correspondence with William Mason. The editors for these volumes will be W. S. Lewis, Grover Cronin, Jr., and Charles H. Bennett.

Expected soon is Mary E. Knapp's Checklist of Verse by David Garrick, distributed by the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia. Listed are about five hundred separate items, which show Garrick's surprising facility in turning out epigrams, prologues, songs, and all kinds of occasional verse. Many have distinct biographical and historical significance.

We look forward eagerly to R. W. Chapman's Selections from Samuel Johnson (Oxford Univ. Press) and to the following: The Monthly Review, 1790-1815: Indexes of Contributors and Articles, edited by Benjamin Nangle (Clarendon); Aubrey Williams's Pope's Dunciad: a Study of Its Meaning (Methuen); Willard Connely's Beau Nash (Werner Laurie); Rebecca Price Parkin's The Poetic Workmanship of Alexander Pope (Univ. of Minn. Press); Melvin J. Friedman, Stream of Consciousness (Yale Univ. Press), which begins with Tristram Shandy.

An autumn issue in the Longmans two-shilling series of pamphlets "Writers and Their Work" will be Gibbon by C. V. Wedgwood.

A work outside our field but by one of our most loyal subscribers is Nineteenth Century Cameo Glass, by Geoffrey W. Beard, which is to be issued in a limited edition of 750 copies by the Ceramic Book Co. of Newport, England.

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS ITEMS

Ernest Mossner's new life of Hume was awarded the McMurray prize of the Texas Institute of Letters, a well-deserved honor for an excellent book.

And speaking of Texas, there are some valuable eighteenth-century items in the William Luther Lewis Library, now in the possession of Texas Christian University. For information about the collection write to Cortell K. Holsapple, Dean of the Evening College.

At the Folger Library last May there was a lecture-recital on "The 18th-Century Theatrical Dance," with George Winchester Stone providing the commentary. A. H. Scouten writes that it was a great success, with large crowds at each performance. The second half of the program consisted of a presentation of Johann Joseph Rudolph's Medea and Jason (1763).

There is a full account of the late Percy Laithwaite in the Lichfield Mercury of June 10, 1955.

We regret to announce the death in June of F. Homes Dudden, Master of Pembroke College, Oxford, and author of the most recent life of Fielding. He was eighty years old.

Columbia University is planning an American Mozart Festival for next April, commemorating the 200th anniversary of his birth. We will let you know later about specific plans.

Robert E. Gallagher (827 Oakwood Ave., Wilmette, Illinois) is working on John Hawkesworth, and is anxious to know of any letters, manuscripts, or other material relating to his life and work.

Harry Pedicord (Hiland Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh 29, Pa.) is interested in the relationship of freemasonry and the English theatres in the eighteenth century. Any information bearing on this topic will, we know, be greatly appreciated.

Howard Vincent for the next two years will be connected with the U.S. Information Service, 41 Rue Fauberg, St. Honoré, Paris.

Among other recent publications received are The Periodical

Post Boy for June 1955; The History of Ideas News Letter, Vol. I, No. 3; and the Seventeenth Century News, Vol. XIII, No. 2. Continued best wishes to our friends among the newsletters.

SOME RECENT ARTICLES

For the earlier period there are: David S. Berkeley, "Some Notes on Probability in Restoration Drama," N&Q for June; John M. Aden, "Dryden and Swift," N&Q for June; John Loftis, "The London Theaters in Early Eighteenth-Century Politics," HLQ for August; Colin M. Turbayne, "Berkeley and Molyneux on Retinal Images," JHI for June; W. M. Peterson, "Pope and Cibber's The Non-Juror," MLN for May; Pierre R. Garai, "Addison and the 'Fiction' of Color," HINL for June; George C. Brauer, Jr., "Recommendations of the 'Spectator' for Students during the Eighteenth Century," N&Q for May.

Concerned with the novelists are: Earl R. Wasserman, "Smollett's Satire on the Hutchinsonians," MLN for May; John B. Shipley, "The 'M' in Fielding's 'Champion,'" N&Q for June; Everett H. Emerson, "An Apology for Tristram Shandy," Contributions to the Humanities, 1954 (Louisiana State Univ. Studies, No. 5); Arthur E. Cash, "The Lockean Psychology of Tristram Shandy," ELH for June.

For Johnsonians: Geoffrey Tillotson, "Johnson's Dictionary," Spectator for April 29, 1955; Edmund Blunden, "Lives of the Poets: If Dr. Johnson Had Lived Rather Longer" (imaginary lives of Wordsworth and Coleridge), TLS for May 20 and 27; Helen Pennock South, "Dr. Johnson and the Quakers," Bulletin of the Friends Historical Ass'n, Spring 1955; R. H. Carnie, "Boswell's Projected History of Ayreshire," N&Q for June; Arthur Sherbo, "Two Notes on Johnson's Revisions," MLR for July; William Manchester, "H. L. Mencken at Seventy-five: America's Sam Johnson" (a comparison of the two men), Saturday Review for Sept. 10.

For the mid-century and later period: A. D. McKillop, "Shaftesbury in Joseph Warton's Enthusiast," MLN for May; Cecil Price, "Some Garrick Letters," N&Q for May; K. R. Jones, "Richard Cox -- Army Agent and Banker," N&Q for May; Francis W. Steer, "The Papers of John Charles Brooke," N&Q for June; William Frankena, "Hutcheson's Moral Sense Theory," JHI for June; Cecil Price, "One of Chesterfield's Letters to His Son," TLS for July 1; Arthur Friedman, "Goldsmith and the Jest-Books," MP for August; Arthur Sherbo, "Cowper's Connoisseur Essays," MLN for May; Lodwick Hartley, "Cowper and the Polygamous Parson," MLQ for June; William B. Todd,

"The Printing of Eighteenth-Century Periodicals," The Library for March; Norton Garfinkle, "Science and Religion in England, 1790-1800," JHI for June; John H. Sutherland, "Blake's 'Mental Traveler,'" ELH for June.

A general article which bears indirectly on some of our problems is W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., "Two Meanings of Symbolism: a Grammatical Exercise," Catholic Renaissance, Autumn 1955.

A JOHNSONIAN ANECDOTE

Bill Todd (Harvard) sends in the following anecdote, contained in the London Evening Post for November 2-4, 1773, which differs slightly from Boswell's later printed report (Life, V, 41).

"When the Doctor was at Edinburgh this summer, previous to his going to the Isle of Sky, he accidentally met with Dr. Robertson, author of the History of Scotland, Age of Charles Vth, &c. who enquiring of him what public places he had seen in the town, offered to accompany him the next day to the kirk, if he thought it an object of curiosity: 'Yes, yes (says Johnson) I should, above all things, like to see your kirk, because it was once a church.'"

EMERSON AND JOHNSON

Wade Thompson (Mich. State) remarks on an interesting use by Emerson of a major work by Johnson. "The fourth paragraph of the essay 'Art and Criticism,' collected in Natural History of Intellect, which reads: 'There is, in every nation, a style which never becomes obsolete,' etc. ... down to 'and where Shakespeare seems to have gathered his comic dialogue,' is lifted bodily from the 30th paragraph of Samuel Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare. This is interesting because it cannot possibly have been simply a mistake -- Emerson changed Johnson's 'this poet' to 'Shakespeare' to fit his own context and consequently must have been aware of the plagiarism." Thompson adds that the 18th paragraph of the essay also sounds very Johnsonian, though he has not been able to find any specific source.